

Civilian Area Plan Template for SHTF



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'Prepper Checklist 101'

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INTRODUCTION

Shit indeed rolls downhill. Inevitably national issues affect regional matters, which in turn influence municipalities & suburbs. An 'Area Study' concentrates on the latter & is an instrument which gathers intelligence, collates data & records anecdotes related to one's local area. This informs one's SHTF preparation by identifying & monitoring local threats & averts strategic shock when civilians prep for unlikely scenarios.

This is a living document & should be updated, MINIMALLY, every 6 months. A soft-copy of this 'Area Study' should be stored on your smart-phone & via hard-copy in the family home.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This template includes personal notes & transcriptions(1) from former Intelligence NCO & contractor, Mike Shelby. I consider Mike, & the 'YouTube' Channel 'S2 Underground', key reference points for those starting their intelligence journey. They have gone to great pains to re-orient military acronyms & intelligence training into bite-sized chunks for civilians. Please consider subscribing to their channels & sharing their content with others in your SHTF network.

1) - These were sourced from a number of 'YouTube' videos, primarily from the 'Forward Observer' channel. It also includes anecdotes I've picked up along the way during my journey into emergency preparedness. Before starting your 'Area Plan' you should, MINIMALLY, watch the video linked: 'Forward Observer' - 'Why you Need an Area Study & How to do one' - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PkRCqK25ti8> (last accessed 12/01/2024)

WHY DO WE NEED AN AREA STUDY?

Many uninformed preppers scoff at the idea of civilians gathering intelligence. Their short-sighted mentality is that one “can't eat intelligence”. Because of this attitude intelligence gathering, sharing & planning is the MOST overlooked aspect of SHTF preparation. Yet the latter, via an 'Area Study', is the VERY thing that may save one from being “eaten” by desperate neighbours or targeted by rioters during civil unrest.

The time to collect evidence is NOW! Collection of data & anecdotes is ONGOING & will NOT produce itself!

The Reasons Why

- Increases survivability.
- Drives / informs decision-making.
- Identifies blind-spots & what to prepare for.
- Prioritises your preparation & responses to SHTF events.
- Anticipates future events.
- You'll have it when you need it! If a SHTF event occurs you will have your 'Area Study' ready, rather than trying to analyse everything “on the fly”.
- It can be shared with others (many of your neighbours will be unprepared for emergencies).
- You avoid 'Strategic Shock'. Many civilians spend inordinate time, energy & money on preparing for events that are very low risk. They are then caught off-guard when a SHTF event occurs that they haven't planned for.

The OODA Loop

According to Lewis (2022)(2) the 'OODA Loop' is a 4 step process which guides decision making. It is especially useful in military applications & civilian SHTF emergencies. The OODA loop filters information, puts it in context & helps individuals & organisations make the most appropriate decisions with the data available.

An 'Area Study' gathers & analyses intelligence thereby addressing the first 2 steps of the OODA loop:

Observe - Intelligence gathering

Orient - Intelligence analysis (making sense of the data / anecdotes & drawing conclusions)

Decide - Use intelligence to make a tactical plan

Act - Put the above plan into action

Many wrongly assume that an 'Area Study' is a tool limited to military use. This couldn't be further from the truth. This resource can be applied to a civilian context & aid local residents during emergencies.

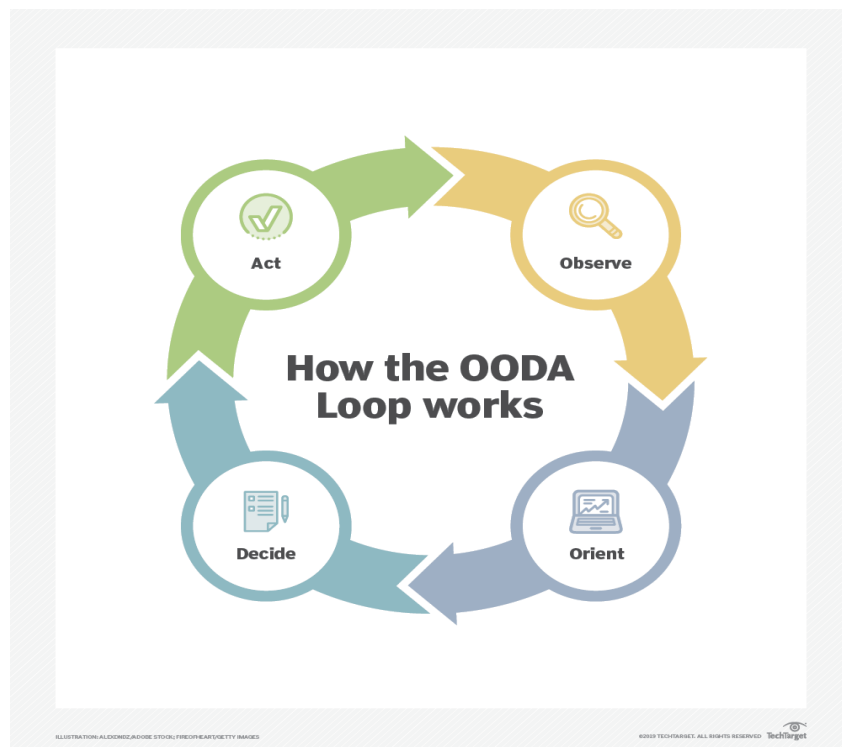


Image via TechTarget from Lewis (2022)

2) – Largely adapted from Sarah Lewis - 'OODA Loop' -

[https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/OODA-loop#:~:text=The%20OODA%20loop%20\(Observe%2C%20Orient,as%20more%20data%20becomes%20available](https://www.techtarget.com/searchcio/definition/OODA-loop#:~:text=The%20OODA%20loop%20(Observe%2C%20Orient,as%20more%20data%20becomes%20available) (last accessed 12/01/2024)

AREA OF OPERATIONS / AREA OF INTEREST

Step 1 – Define & Overview your 'Area of Operation' (AO)

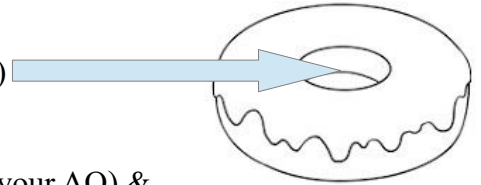
Think- “What can DIRECTLY affect me?”

Think - “Where do I expect to travel or operate during a SHTF event?”

Act – By totalling dominating this area in regards to intelligence

- ***'Area of Operations' (AO) Defined: Keep it small!***

- The AO is the hole in the doughnut (smaller than the AI)
- Remember to include a map of your AO (Step 13)



Think carefully about how large your area of defence will be (your AO) & gauge how much time you have to work with. Why? If you make the AO large, & you're time poor, your analysis will be superficial. It is also important to take note of buildings, pathways, driveways, ditches, road conditions, intersections & natural formations.

NB - For most suburbanites the AO should be limited to one's home & yard. For most inner-city residents the AO should be limited to one's flat & building.

- ***Access, Gates & Doors: Walk the perimeter & take notes***

- Are they lockable & in working order?
- Can they be accessed remotely?
- Do you have a master key / code? Spare key?
- How often are the codes changed?

- ***Physical Defence of the AO: No, you can't just wait for the police! Be pro-active!***

- How, why & with whom do you intend to defend your AO?

- ***Key AO Intelligence Contacts: Curate a contacts list & stick it on your fridge!***

- Who has local knowledge of your AO that can help you plan?

- ***Bugging-Out: A last resort! You should always aim to Shelter-in-Place!***

- Under what scenario are you most likely to bug-out? Why? (See Steps 1 & 11)
- Include the list of people with whom you will bug-out
- Include the location, routes & maps for at least 2 suitable bug-out-locations (BOLs)
- What will you take with you when bugging-out? (evac bag / go bag / bug-out bag) &
- Where will the above kit bag be stored for easy access?

- ***Identify Intelligence Gaps***

- What don't you know about your AO that could assist you in a SHTF event?
- Now you “know that you don't know” what can you do to address this vacuum?

Step 2 – Define & Overview your 'Area of Interest' (AI)

Think – “What can INDIRECTLY affect me?”

Think - “What outside of my AO is important & where is it?”

Act – By totalling dominating this area in regards to intelligence

- ***'Area of Interest' (AI) Defined: Larger than your AO***

- The AI is the dough of the doughnut
- Remember to include a map of your AI (Step 13)



- ***What outside my AO is Important in my AI?***

- Schools & parks
- Shopping centres
- Friend & family residences

- ***What can Indirectly Affect me & Where is it?***

- Traffic intersections
- Public transport (railway stations & bus stops)

- ***What / Who / Where do I Need to Monitor?***

- Bush-fire corridors
- Local creeks, ponds, lakes & rivers susceptible to flooding
- Local gangs
- Local police & fire stations

- ***Identify Intelligence Gaps***

- What don't you know about your AI that could assist you in a SHTF event?
- Now you “know that you don't know” what can you do to address this vacuum?

OPERATING ENVIRONMENT (STEPS 3 – 10)

This part of the 'Area Study' will concentrate on where you will primarily operate during a SHTF event RE – the AO/AI. It will emphasise:

- Physical terrain
- Human terrain
- Critical Infrastructure
- Governance & Politics
- Military / Law Enforcement / Security
- Economics & Finance

Step 3 – Study your Physical Terrain & Local Weather Patterns

Terrain analysis is a very important part of your 'Area Study'. It helps you identify the natural & man-made features of your local terrain & how it can affect travel & self-defence operations. It also allows you to quickly seize & organise retention of vantage points, key intersections, gates & doors.

In short, look at the features of your AO/AI & analyse how it can affect you & those who mean you harm.

OCOKA

Keep in mind the acronym OCOKA when analysing your physical terrain & weather, namely:

Observation – Identify terrain affected by weather. Keep in mind that the urban landscape tends to limit your range (weapons) & vision (fields of fire).

Cover & Concealment – Cover refers to a physical barrier whilst concealment relies on camouflage. The urban environment is rich in cover but not so conducive to camouflage, examples of the former include embankments, vegetation & built-up areas.

Obstacles – Anything that restricts movement e.g. buildings, ditches, trenches, gates, security doors, water-courses, forests, deserts & swamps.

Key Terrain – Anything that if seized, or retained, gives you THE advantage e.g. bridges, level clearings in rough terrain & choke-points.

Avenues of approach – Where can you ingress / egress out of your AO/AI? Do these avenues of approach go near your 'cover & concealment' positions? Do these approaches go through a blind spot or choke-point? Can they be affected by the weather? Note that high speed approach routes include arterial roads. Low speed approach routes include footpaths & hiking trails.

Largely adapted from – 'Army Study Guide' – 'OCOKA' -

https://www.armystudyguide.com/content/army_board_study_guide_topics/survival/ocoka.shtml
(last accessed on 12/01/2024)

'S2 Underground' – 'KOCOA: Terrain Analysis for Home Defense' -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KV4zHsYbMZk> (last accessed on 12/01/2024)

- ***Topography:*** *Seizure & retention of elevated ground gives you THE advantage e.g. vantage points*
 - Topography of the terrain in the AO/AI (noting key points of elevation)
- ***Choke-points:*** *Seizure & retention gives you CONTROL over who enters / exits*

Choke-points can affect your ingress / egress. They can also be used by people with nefarious intentions to interdict you. Furthermore, if civil unrest was to occur it would be advantageous to barricade the choke-points in & around your AO/AI.

Identify & list the choke-points in your AO/AI & mark them on the appropriate map for quick reference (Step 13). Barricading these choke-points with old tyres, debris etc., is vital during civil unrest.

- ***Alternative Points of Travel:*** *Often neglected, so take note!*

- Bush-tracks
- Tunnels
- Logging trails
- Lines of drift

- ***Cover & Concealment:*** *Hide in plain sight!*

After you've identified your vantage points, choke-points & alternative points of travel identify where you can establish sentry positions & listening posts / observation posts (LP / OP) if the need arises. Use cover & concealment to hide or obscure these from street view. Consider range & fields of fire if you intend to defend you AO via arms.

- ***Weather:*** *Can undo the best of plans!*

- Identify weather seasons (storm, flooding & bushfire seasons)
- Identify how these seasons can impinge upon the AO/AI & create hazards
- Record mean temperatures
- Weather tools or apps (temperature, barometer)

Step 4 – Identify your Human Terrain

What are people's attitudes, beliefs, behaviour & culture? How can this affect me during a SHTF event?

- ***Who Lives in your AO/AI? Who are Influential or Key Personnel? Names & identities***

- Building superintendent / townhouse manager
- Body Corporate/HOA representative
- Long-term residents
- Emergency service workers
- Politicians
- Tradesmen (electricians, plumbers, carpenters)
- Teachers
- Nurses, EMTs / Paramedics & doctors

NB – Try to co-opt these people into your SHTF network! (Step 5)

- ***Demographics:*** *You will need to look up census data*

- Median age
- Rates of marriage / divorce
- Av. # of children per household
- Voting patterns
- Socio-economic factors etc.

- ***Local Attitudes, Beliefs, Behaviours & Cultures***

- Pro or anti-gun?
- Political affiliation?
- What do people think of law enforcement?
- Socially conservative or woke?
- Response to Covid lockdowns?
- Religious outlook? WASP or migrant?

- ***What do People Think about you?***

- How can this affect you during a SHTF event?
- How can this help / hinder the building of a SHTF network? (Step 5)

NB – This can be blind-spot as many people are weak at conducting thorough self-introspection.

- ***Groups or Individuals to be Monitored***

- Problem neighbours
- Local criminals
- Those who espoused a 'lone wolf' mentality pre-SHTF
- Unprepared family members & close friends who know you prep
- Online extremist groups / individuals

NB – Adhering to pre-SHTF operational security protocols can mitigate some of these concerns.

Step 5 – Developing a SHTF Network

As intelligence is collected in an ongoing fashion it's vital that civilians form a SHTF network. This is THE MOST difficult part of the 'Area Plan' & requires one to be very pro-active.

- ***Why Develop a Network?***

The 'lone wolf' mentality has NO place in SHTF preparedness. How so?

- The more people in your network, the more you can influence them RE - by directing them to slowly start prepping
- More people = more intelligence one can gather. Instead of one set of eyes & ears monitoring for local threats you can have several!
- In times of emergencies you can lend, borrow & pool resources to help each other during a SHTF event.

- ***How do I Develop a Network?***

Intelligence doesn't produce itself. It requires time & effort. But how can I go about doing this?

- Initially focus on recruiting household members & extended family.
- Knock on your neighbour's door with some baked goods & introduce yourself

- Join your local mosque / synagogue / church / temple & informally chat with the parishioners after the prayer service
- Join your local sporting club / gym / boy scouts club & chat with the members
- Become a member of your neighbourhood watch. If one doesn't exist establish one!
- Join social media groups / discussion boards related to your geographical area
- Organise a neighbourhood BBQ
- Knock on doors & introduce yourself
- Establish a 'Whatsapp' / 'Telegram' broadcast group where you can publish monthly intelligence briefs

NB - You can't establish a SHTF network without FIRST forming relationships. Over time indirectly bring up emergency preparedness issues & gauge their interest. Based on your interactions, & gut feeling, then open up further about your goals of forming a network.

- ***Everyone is a Sensor***

Every member of your SHTF network is a 'sensor'. They can detect & pass on intelligence that can help predict future events & inform your collective preparations. This can be done by:

- Monitoring graffiti & identifying gang tags
- Recording where & when we see people wearing gang colours or bkie vests
- Observing police build-up
- Sharing information about helicopters & drones
- Reporting sketchy pedestrians & door-to-door salesmen
- Reading local news
- Taking note when driving around your local neighbourhood (active observation)
- Eliciting anecdotal information from friends, family & neighbours

Step 6 – Identify Critical Infrastructure

Identify the following infrastructure & mark it on the appropriate map for quick reference:

- Food manufacturers
- Water filtration / purification plants
- Gas distributors
- Electricity sub-stations
- Transport companies
- Amateur radio clubs / radio stations
- Internet service providers / phone companies
- Pharmacies & hospitals
- Schools (as they are often used by governments during SHTF events)

NB - Bad actors & political regimes often interrupt logistical hubs, transport systems & electricity generation / distribution.

Step 7 – Study the Politics & Governance of your AO/AI

Identify the name, contact details & political outlook of the following people via scouring official websites & social media:

- political appointees e.g. heads of independent agencies
- elected officials
 - local councillor / municipal representative
 - mayor
 - state member of parliament
 - governor / premier
 - senator / federal member of parliament

NB - Pay particular attention to their individual bill voting records & advocacy of issues which could affect you in a SHTF event e.g. access to guns, stance on crime, promote equality of outcome rather than equality of opportunity etc.

Step 8 – Study the Role of the Military, Security & Law Enforcement in your AO/AI

- ***Military***
 - training facilities / barracks
 - depots
 - logistic hubs & warehouses
 - airports
 - ports
- ***Security: Are there any private companies who specialise in ...?***
 - cyber security
 - dog training
 - static guarding
 - working as a Private Military Company (PMC)
- ***National Guard / Civilian Emergency Response Volunteers***
 - Neighbourhood watch
 - State Emergency Service (SES)
 - Boy Scouts
- ***Local Militia Groups***
 - Name of the militia & year of establishment
 - Member count
 - Philosophy
 - Training location / Hang-outs

- ***Law Enforcement***

- Address & contact details of the local police station
- Names of key staff e.g. duty sergeant

- ***Response Times of Emergency Services***

- How long does it take the police, fire & ambulance to reach your home address?

Step 9 – Relevant Crime Statistics

Look up statistics on the following crimes in your AO/AI, namely:

- Shootings & stabbings
- Physical & sexual assault
- Unlawful entry & robbery
- Trespassing & vagrancy
- Property damage & street vandalism
- Unlawful use of a vehicle
- Theft (exc. unlawful entry), handling stolen goods & fraud
- Drug offences
- Traffic offences

NB - Based on the collected statistics can you draw any conclusions? E.g. most common offences committed, time of the day / day of the week when most offences were committed & crime hot-spots within your local area.

Step 10 – Study the Economic & Financial Interests in your AO/AI

- Economic disparities between neighbours in your AO
 - Economic disparities between the populations of your AO & AI
 - Highest levels of education
 - Employment rate / unemployment rate
 - Median income
 - Median price of rent / buying a home
-

THREAT OVERVIEW

Step 11 – Potential Threats in your AO/AI

Types of Threats

- **Conventional** e.g. domestic police state, foreign & domestic armies. Have legal authority from a recognised government. Wear uniforms.
- **Irregular** e.g. street gangs, looters, organised crime, vandals, insurgents & guerillas. Typically don't wear uniforms or care about the law.
- **Catastrophic** e.g. hurricane, tornado, flash flooding, earthquake, pandemic, bush-fire, nuclear plant melt-down, chemical / biological attack.
- **Disruptive** e.g. power outages, heavy rain, identity theft, cyber attacks & fuel shortages.

Sources of Threats: What will break, slow down or cause disruption?

- **Fault lines** e.g. is there friction between different ethnic / religious groups in your neighbourhood?
- **Vulnerabilities** e.g. If you live near a National Park your home may be vulnerable to bushfires.
- **Limitations** e.g. If you live in a suburb that has a high crime rate you may be targeted for your stored supplies (pre-SHTF & during SHTF)

Likelihood & Impact of Threats

Develop a range of potential scenarios that could occur RE - SHTF events. Explain in detail who, what, when, where & how these events / people / organisations threaten your local area. Then take your list of potential, known or suspected threats & identify likelihood & impact.

- **LIKELIHOOD** – assign a letter grade H (High) or L (Low)
- **IMPACT** – assign a letter grade H or L
- **RANK** - focus on preparing for the H/H scenarios first. In the example below (& it will differ for your individualised 'Area Plan') one would prep for the first 3 scenarios highlighted

1. Tornado (H/H)
2. Rioting & looting (H/H)
3. Increased crime due to poor economic conditions (H/H)
4. Grid down for 7+ days (L/H)
5. Grid down for 30+ days (L/H)
6. Nuclear meltdown (L/H)

NB – The above will DIRECTLY inform you individualised 'Area Plan'.

CONTACTS

Step 12 – Organisational & Personal Contacts

- National Emergency Phone # (911 - US, 999 - UK, 000 – Australia)
 - Local police station address
 - Local fire station address
 - Local hospital address
 - Poisons Information hot-line
 - Local weather station / government meteorology dept.
 - Electricity company (downed power lines)
 - Utility companies (burst water mains, gas leaks)
 - Family & friends (who live both inside / outside of your AO/AI)
 - Key contacts within your SHTF network
-

MAPS

Step 13 – Overlaid Maps of the AO/AI

This is only a suggestion, but I highly recommend you invest the time & energy into developing your own highly INDIVIDUALISED maps. You can layer these data points over the same map if you so wish.

Some things you may wish to mark on your map include, but are not limited to:

- Mobility corridors
 - Alternate routes
 - Access points
 - Key terrain (elevated points)
 - Crime hot spots
 - Bushfire hotspots
 - Localised flooding
 - Bug-out-locations
 - Addresses of SHTF network members
-